

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 2, 2007

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We are extremely concerned about the reported 25% budget cut at the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Office of Women's Health. The cut not only calls into question FDA's commitment to the office's mission, but also raises serious concerns about the status of all women's health offices at the Department of Health and Human Services. We are writing to request a briefing on the current and planned activities and budgets of the offices of women's health, and related programs and centers, at the Department.

As you are aware, offices that focus on women's health serve a crucial role in the Department. Physiological and social differences mean that diseases — and treatments — often affect women differently than men. However, until recently, medical science paid inadequate attention to these differences and to women's medical needs. Research programs often used only men as subjects, and conditions that affected women exclusively were often under studied.

Over the past several decades, the medical and public health community came to an understanding of the need for more knowledge about the intersection of gender and health. In 1991, the Office of Women's Health was established at HHS to create and coordinate "a comprehensive women's health agenda," covering "health care prevention and service delivery, research, public and health care professional education, and career advancement for women in the health professions and in scientific careers."¹ The Office of Women's Health serves a crucial leadership role in research on the different and often unique health impact of disease on women. What's more, it serves as a much-needed source of health information for American women on issues from breast cancer to menopause. Additional offices of women's health — including those at FDA, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the National Institutes of Health — have since been established to serve this coordinating and educational role within the specific entities' work.

The reported budget cut at FDA raises serious questions about the Department's commitment to, and intentions for, the several offices and programs at HHS that promote women's health. We therefore request a briefing on the current and planned activities and

¹ Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Women's Health, *History of OWH* (available online at: www.4woman.gov/owh/about/mhf.cfm).

The Honorable Michael O. Leavitt
March 2, 2007
Page 2

budgets of women's health programs at HHS. Please contact Naomi Seiler on Chairman Waxman's Oversight and Government Reform Committee staff at Naomi.Seiler@mail.house.gov or (202) 225-5056.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



Louise McIntosh Slaughter
Member of Congress



Lois Capps
Member of Congress



Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress



Jay Inslee
Member of Congress



Diana DeGette
Member of Congress